

Interview with John & Elizabeth Edwards
THE CHARLIE ROSE SHOW 11:00 PM EST
December 15, 2004

HIGHLIGHT:

John and Elizabeth Edwards discuss the campaign trail`04 and Elizabeth`s recent diagnosis of breast cancer.

BODY: CHARLIE ROSE, HOST: Welcome to the broadcast. Tonight, Senator John Edwards of North Carolina. He was the Democratic nominee for vice president 2004. Joining him, his wife, Elizabeth Edwards.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. JOHN EDWARDS (D), NORTH CAROLINA: I came to the realization -- and I was very glad to come to it -- that these causes that I talked about, you know, whether it`s two Americas and poverty, civil rights, all the things - - keeping the country safe -- all the things that I care about, that that`s what this was about for me. It was the right reason for me to have run for president. It wasn`t about me. It was about what I wanted to do for the country. And I still want to see those things done for this country that I love so much. The question is, what`s the best way to do it?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS, SEN. JOHN EDWARDS` WIFE: I didn`t feel like it was a death sentence in any way. And it`s not that it wasn`t -- you know, I walked out of that ultrasound with, you know, I think probably a little bit of a shock, but I got to the car, and my friend Hargrave (ph) was there waiting for me. I told her, well, it didn`t look good. And I was sort of back on track. Now we`re going to -- we`re going to -- what do we need to do next to fight this? It wasn`t, it wasn`t, you know, now everything is over. Now everything is beginning.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

CHARLIE ROSE: Senator John Edwards and Elizabeth Edwards for the hour.

CHARLIE ROSE: Tonight, a conversation with Senator John Edwards and his wife, Elizabeth Edwards. The senator from North Carolina was the Democratic nominee for vice president in 2004. He gave up his Senate seat to run for the Democratic nomination for president. He will soon return to North Carolina. Elizabeth Edwards is not only John Edwards wife, but also a former lawyer and his closest confidant. She was active on the campaign trail. She announced after the presidential election that she had breast cancer. We talked earlier today at their home in

Washington.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

CHARLIE ROSE: You know, when say the name John Edwards today, the first question they have is, how is Elizabeth?

JOHN EDWARDS: How are you?

CHARLIE ROSE: How are you?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I'm actually doing pretty well. My treatment is going well. I feel pretty strong most of the time. And I just have complete confidence that this is going to work out.

CHARLIE ROSE: Tell me the story. I mean, when you wake up one morning and you find out that there is a lump on your breast.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Actually, it was in Conotia (ph), Wisconsin. And I was headed to an event later that day. Cate had actually been with me, said goodbye to her in the morning because she had an earlier start. And took a shower and found -- I found a lump. And I was fortunately traveling with a dear friend of mine, a school teacher from Raleigh. She -- I said, come here. You have to tell me what you think. And she got on the phone immediately, talked to my doctor, and made an appointment. And I went in a few days later to have him check it, and then go get a mammogram. And later I got a needle biopsy after the election was over, but I pretty much knew after the mammogram and ultrasound that we were going to be talking about how to deal with breast cancer.

CHARLIE ROSE: And how do you, what -- when you hear the word cancer...

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: You know, now, of course, the prognosis is so much better that you don't -- people don't say cancer anymore. They actually, you know, people feel like this is something they can beat, if they've got otherwise good health and insurance and things like that on their side. And I do have all those things. So that's -- I didn't feel like it was a death sentence in any way. And it's not that it wasn't -- you know, I walked out of that ultrasound with a little bit of, you know, I think probably a little bit of shock, but I got to the car and my friend, Hargrave (ph), was there waiting for me.

And told her, well, it didn't look good. And I was sort of back on track, now we're going to, now we're going to -- what do we need to do next to fight this? It wasn't, you know, now everything

is over. Now everything is beginning.

CHARLIE ROSE: You found this out on what day?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I found it out -- the ultrasound was Friday before the Tuesday election. So five days before. Now, I had discovered it about a week earlier, in Wisconsin.

CHARLIE ROSE: So you were living with this through the last...

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Last days.

CHARLIE ROSE: Last few days.

JOHN EDWARDS: She called me. I was actually on the campaign plane. Told me in her usual matter-of-fact way that this had happened and it was going to be OK. And wanted me to call Wells (ph), our doctor, and talk to him directly, which I did. And that's what I -- he was much more blunt than Elizabeth was. He said, I think she's got breast cancer.

CHARLIE ROSE: Now, what is her usual way of saying -- by the way, I just saw an article in "The New York Times," and also I need to have a biopsy.

JOHN EDWARDS: It was very casual. I mean, she sounded -- I could hear a little bit, because we've known each other a long time. We've been married 27 years. I could hear a little more seriousness in her voice, but she was very low key about it.

CHARLIE ROSE: What is this magic of the two of you, that you guys seem to have, that started a long time ago in UNC law school?

JOHN EDWARDS: I think it started out as, at least in my -- for me, it started out with respect. Because I saw Elizabeth sort of from a distance, because she was smart as a whip and so impressive. And it's why when I wanted to go out with her -- which took a while by the way -- for me to convince her to go out with me.

CHARLIE ROSE: So what was your problem? You had a lot of suitors, you had a lot of guys and you didn't need to take the first call.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: He's -- I had been to English graduate school. And my dad was in the Navy, so I had traveled around. And here was this country boy. And do we really have anything in common? And then what I discovered -- and it didn't take that long really -- you're overstating -- is that we had all the important things in common. You know, we cared about the

same things. Our families were both enormously important. The way he spoke about his family was so telling to me. And his community. You know, the small town he grew up in. The affection with which he spoke. And I realized that I could find people who could quote Shakespeare a dime a dozen. But this was pretty rare.

JOHN EDWARDS: She thought I was kind of a -- she thought I was kind of a redneck from North Carolina.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Which you were.

JOHN EDWARDS: For a reason. I was. Not only was, I still am.

CHARLIE ROSE: So it worked out.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Yes, it did.

CHARLIE ROSE: Today, when you -- walk me through what you have, because your story, as you understand better than anyone, is important to women who might need to have an examination. And, B, the idea of support is essential to the campaign you're now on.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Right. It is. I have a kind of breast cancer that -- basically, breast cancer might form in the milk ducts and this actually sort of came out of it. And that's what I felt. I felt the lump where it had come out. And it's -- I don't think it's particularly atypical. It's positive for estrogen, which is a good sign. It means that certain medications are going to be available to me that hopefully will control, will control any possible outbreak in the future, the possibility of that. So I take chemotherapy to reduce the size of the tumor. I'll get surgery, as so many women do. And follow it with radiation to make certain there's nothing left. And then beyond, a protocol for five years, or however long they tell me, where I take medication and get check-ups.

And of course now I won't do what I did do, which was neglect mammograms. We've moved up to Washington. It was easy. My doctors in Raleigh, when we'd go home, you know, you'd be home for Christmas or home for some holiday, and it just didn't seem like making an appointment for that was really on the top of your agenda.

Now obviously it is going to be on the top of my agenda and urging other women too.

CHARLIE ROSE: Why is that important?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Well, because I might have identified it -- might have identified it earlier. It would have increased my treatment options. You know, we're doing chemotherapy first to reduce the size of the tumor, because it had grown to such an extent that I needed to do

that first. And whether that's -- whether one is better than the other, I don't know. But I do know if I had caught it earlier, I would have had less chance that the cancer cells migrate or metastasize to some other part of your body. And now of course, because it grew to that size, there is a risk that that's happened, which we hope the chemotherapy is going to solve, and we hope that the medication after my treatment is going to protect me against. But you're better protected if you find it early.

CHARLIE ROSE: So lesson No. 1...

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Lesson No. 1.

CHARLIE ROSE: Get your test, get your mammogram...

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Get your mammograms.

CHARLIE ROSE: And make sure you have -- for men, prostate cancer and everything else...

JOHN EDWARDS: Absolutely.

CHARLIE ROSE: Make sure you have...

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Make sure you have...

CHARLIE ROSE: ... annual physical exam, or whatever the doctor says...

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: If you don't do it for yourself, do it for your families. I mean, it's not just me, as you said, going through this. It's my whole family. And I have the advantage of enormous support. I've been trying to talk it up to husbands and to family members, to be the kind of support John has been to me. Because it just makes it so much easier for me that he's there for me, that he's supportive, that he's at all -- you know, he comes to chemotherapy with me, which just makes the whole process a lot easier.

CHARLIE ROSE: He goes to chemotherapy with you.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Yeah, he does.

JOHN EDWARDS: Yeah, but I just say I do it as much for me as I do it for her. I mean, we're very important to each other, as both of us know very well. And our kids know very well. And it's important to me to be there to see what she's going through. So it's important to both of us.

CHARLIE ROSE: What have you learned about cancer, about the -- what's necessary and what ought we know from your experience beyond the...

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Getting...

(CROSSTALK)

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Well, I mean, there are a couple of things. I'm doing a clinical trial. I'm trying to urge people to do that. Because one of the reasons that the prognosis is so much better now is because people have gone through the clinical trials. We're finding new ways, faster ways, more effective ways to treat cancer, because people do those trials. And I'm doing one that has -- means I get additional testing during the process.

If people do that, then we're going to continue to have those kinds of increases in the medicine, or advances. And if we don't do it, we're not going to have those kinds of -- so I'm really urging people. I really -- I'd like to say I sort of learned something about life. But in a lot of ways I haven't, because I think we understood how precious each day was, each day is, before this happened. But I have found this enormous network of primarily women across the country who have e-mailed me, who have written me, who have sent me caps and sent me scarves that they knitted. A woman I admire very much sent me a scarf that she had knitted. And she's a singer, she's gone on tour. And when she went on tour, she had other women knit a little bit in it. So it's sort of this token of support from women I've never met. And you see how strong women have been and how they want to share that -- their experiences and the fact that they've made it through this process with other people. It just gives you what we probably had already, but this enormous faith in the capacity of communities to bind together on things that are important.

CHARLIE ROSE: What did you learn from this campaign, about yourself, about politics? About what you and your family had to do?

I mean, first of all it's a great experience.

JOHN EDWARDS: Amazing experience.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Yeah, it is.

JOHN EDWARDS: I mean, it's the most amazing experience of our lives, both of us I think would say that. And we had the gift of our daughter, our older daughter, Cate. You know, everyone sees Emma Claire who is 6 and Jack, who is 4. My older daughter, Cate, also campaigned with us and separately.

And I got to see her growth and maturation during this campaign. It was an amazing thing to see. I learned a lot over the two years that I campaigned beginning in the presidential primaries and then through the vice presidential process. Enormous faith. I have an incredible faith in the

strength and optimism of the people of this country. I mean, I saw people who were going through struggles, really difficult struggles -- I mean you've asked Elizabeth about what our family is going through now. But there are families all over this country going through similar problems and problems that are very different. But they wake up every day believing that if they work hard and they fight hard, things are going to be better. Going to be better for their kids. Going to be better for their grandkids. I saw that everywhere. Now, I had grown up with it in North Carolina. But I saw it with people who spoke with a very different accent, in Iowa and in New Hampshire and in New York, and all over this country.

I just think -- it sounds simple, but there's nothing that the people in this country can't do if they put their heart and minds to it. And what they need, if you ask me what else I learned, they need leaders who believe in them. They need leaders who will look at those things that they share, the beliefs that they share, the principles that they share and find ways to unite them around that belief system, to do good things for themselves and for the country.

CHARLIE ROSE: One of the things that you did in the primary season was came up with this sort of wonderful campaign speech, and everybody on both sides of the political aisle give you credit for, which is two Americas.

JOHN EDWARDS: Yes.

CHARLIE ROSE: And part of it is health care.

JOHN EDWARDS: Yes.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: That's right.

CHARLIE ROSE: I mean, here you are dealing with a life-threatening disease, knowing that you, because of your place in life, because of your own fame and other things, have access to the best medical care in the world.

JOHN EDWARDS: That's absolutely right.

CHARLIE ROSE: There's somebody somewhere in America, maybe lots of them, have no health insurance, have no fame, have no access to who the best doctors are, the best treatments.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I met some of those people. I met them -- we met them on the trail. And in a country this great, it shouldn't be that way. The truth of the matter is, we hear all the time about people coming from foreign countries, coming here for health care, because we have the best health care in the whole world. They come to America because they know they can get the best health care. But Americans don't have access to that same thing.

And it was part of the frustration, you know, in the whole political process was seeing that happen and not being able to right that wrong.

JOHN EDWARDS: It's a perfect example, though, of the two Americas that you just spoke about. I mean, this is a great example. We have great health care. We got -- Elizabeth goes in to get her chemotherapy. We're not worried about paying for it. We have health insurance. We know it is going to be OK. And think about if some poor single mother living in Dubuque, Iowa, a place I spent a lot of time, had exactly the same problem. I mean, she would be terrified every day about how she was going to pay for her chemotherapy, who is going to take care of her children. This is not the kind of country that we believe in. And whether it's health care, whether it's the economy, jobs, whatever the issue, I think the truth is that in a large way, what this campaign was about for the two of us -- when I talked about unifying the country, I'm also talking about in a substantive way, so that we live in a country where everybody has the kind of opportunities the two of us had. I mean, it was amazing what we've had available to us.

CHARLIE ROSE: Do you think he, on the presidential campaign, as the vice presidential nominee after the Democratic National Convention, articulated with the same passion and with the same traction, you know, the eloquence he had in the primary season? Was there any difference as you look at it?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Well, I'll be honest. I almost never saw him. I campaigned separately so much of the time. So I did not see him. And when I did see him, I saw him in rally kind of -- and I actually think that the best way to speak to the American voter -- a rally is important when you have 10,000 people, or we had 25,000 people in North Carolina come to an event -- when you have crowds like that, you can't have the kind of conversations.

CHARLIE ROSE: That you had in Iowa caucuses.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: That you had in Iowa caucuses. Those, that kind of intimate conversation that you have, there's nothing more powerful than that. Because then the people who seek to lead you get to see both what you're made of, and whether you understand what's happening in their lives, whether that's what you're talking about, whether you're talking their language, whether you're speaking to the things that are important to them. So that's going to always be in my view a more powerful way of speaking to people than what you sort of -- all candidates, Republicans, Democrats, independents, what they're all stuck with in the process of a presidential campaign.

CHARLIE ROSE: The reason I'm asking is because you were quoted somewhere -- and you obviously remember this -- in the sense you weren't sure you have been able to get the kind of -- had an opportunity to say all the things you wanted to say about your relationship to faith and

God. And it came up in the context of looking back at 2004 and the whole notion of values. I mean, did you feel that somehow once a presidential campaign takes on, you don't have a chance to do what it is that connects with people so well?

JOHN EDWARDS: Well, it's just the nature of things. I mean, the presidential candidates are the focus of any presidential campaign, as they should be. And the primary role of the vice presidential candidates is to talk about, advocate for their presidential candidate, and then to advocate against what they think the damage, in my case, was being done by George Bush. So that's just the focus. I think that's the most natural thing in the world.

When we were running as -- in the presidential primaries, I mean, I was the presidential candidate. I mean, it was obviously -- and it always is -- easier to talk about the beliefs that I had from in here, because instead of advocating for someone else -- and I want to say here, because both of us believe it strongly -- John Kerry is a good man. And he would have made a terrific president of the United States.

But when I was running for president of the United States, everything I believe, the things that I cared most about were the things that came from in here. And so people saw that.

CHARLIE ROSE: Speaking of John Kerry, I'm understanding he called you every day...

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: He did, during the...

CHARLIE ROSE: ... once he discovered that you had this issue.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: ... once he discovered -- John called him immediately so he would know what was happening. He asked me if it was all right. And I said it was. And he just was really attentive and concerned about what was happening with me. He said, I didn't need to campaign if I didn't want to. And I said, no, might as well be doing this as anything else.

CHARLIE ROSE: Why do you think the Democrats lost the presidential campaign?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Well, I mean the easy answer is more people voted for the Republicans.

CHARLIE ROSE: Why did more people vote for the Republicans?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I don't know the answer. I think that we didn't, you know, we didn't speak maybe to the people we needed to. I think that's sometimes part of the problem with these events, the events that you have. You want to have a conversation with the people who are yet to be persuaded.

How do you get in front of them? You know, if you can lure them to your event so that they can

hear you, that's great. But the chances are they're not coming to those events, so you depend on other ways.

You depend on the media to help you get your message across, to maybe entice them to say this is somebody I ought to be interested in. Maybe we weren't effective in that way.

I don't know exactly. But we didn't speak to the people that we needed to speak to, to get them to

understand why we thought John Kerry would be a better leader for this country. I mean, I think it's as simple as that. Now, how you reach them, that's a different question that's left to people who are...

CHARLIE ROSE: Well, Ralph Reed was on the program last night, you know, and he said that he thought that the success they had had to do with sort of old-style campaigning. I mean, which was that they had a core of volunteers who believed in George Bush, but who had worked together for two years. They really were not in a sense people who brought in by an outside organization, but they were people.

Do you think there's something to that?

JOHN EDWARDS: I mean, I think that George Bush was in office for four years. We didn't choose John Kerry as the Democratic nominee until a few months ago.

CHARLIE ROSE: Until July.

JOHN EDWARDS: That's right, and so we had a much shorter period of time. So I think, I think, yes, did that play a role? Yes. Politics are always local. And we were playing catch-up. There's no doubt about that.

But I think speaking, going forward as opposed to just looking back, going forward, I think that the most important thing for us is to, No. 1, to have passion and integrity, to fight for the things that we believe in. I hear lots of debate, and it's the most natural thing in the world after an election, about where we belong on the ideological spectrum. I think we need to stop worrying about that. I think we ought to focus instead on our basic belief system, the things that we are passionate about, and to fight for those things.

I mean, during the primaries, for example, I talked about the difference in valuing work versus wealth in America. That work is what made America great. That's what we should value. And there are a lot of substantive policy ideas that go with that. That we as a nation have a moral responsibility to do something about 36 million Americans who live in poverty.

Now, those are things that I believe. I believe them deeply. I think we should fight for them.

CHARLIE ROSE: And those are faith as well -- those are value issues as well as economic issues.

JOHN EDWARDS: Of course they are. Of course they are. And people know when you're

fighting for something that comes from in here. And that's what I think -- I think that's what presidential elections are about. People are looking for integrity. They're looking for strength. They're looking for character.

And I think as we look forward, we Democrats, and as we choose candidates in the future, we need that.

We need that kind of strength and conviction and passion, and not focus so much on ideology or where we go on the political spectrum.

CHARLIE ROSE: I too want to look at the future. But looking at the future, you have to make this -- ask this question. Has the Republican Party, certainly now in this most recent election, made a better case to those people who are looking for the things that you just talked about? Those issues of moral values and issues of faith and issues of respect for work. Did they in the past -- have they owned more of that territory than the Democratic Party ought to allow them to own?

JOHN EDWARDS: They talk about it a lot. They talk about it a lot.

CHARLIE ROSE: Well, but it must be resonating, because they won the election.

JOHN EDWARDS: Yeah, and they talk about it a lot, but, Charlie, they don't do the things, the substantive things that stand behind their rhetoric. And a perfect example is poverty. George Bush has talked in the past about poverty. I mean, he's talked about the need to do something about poverty. He hasn't done a single thing about it, except make it worse. And that's just an example. It is George Bush who has promoted policies that value wealth in this country, not people who work hard for a living, which is most of America.

So my own belief is when we're talking about core principles, Americans need to see that we will fight for what we believe in. And that we have a passion for it. And I think they will see -- this is what we have to believe over the long term -- they will see the difference between rhetoric and reality. As long as we are really fighting for these principle beliefs that I just talked about.

CHARLIE ROSE: Do you believe the Democratic National -- there's a big series of speeches that took place at the Democratic National Convention leading up to who is going to be the new head of the Democratic Party. Are you involved in that process? Do you have a candidate? Do you want the Democratic Party in a sense to examine how it reflects what you just said?

JOHN EDWARDS: Well, I don't have a candidate. I've talked to a number of the people who are running. They're good people. They're really good people who can run and do this job, a number of them, who could do a terrific job. I think we do have -- you mentioned earlier what Ralph Reed said on your show last night. I think we can certainly do better organizationally, particularly if

we start now instead of starting just a few months before the election. Although I have to applaud the extraordinary efforts of men and women in organized labor. I mean, there were amazing efforts made on the ground over a short period of time to get voters to the polls. But I think at the end of the day, it's very hard for the head of the DNC to be the voice of the Democratic Party. I think the reality is, the presidential candidate ends up being the voice for the national Democratic Party. That's just the way it is. It's the way it's always likely to be. Now, in the interim...

CHARLIE ROSE: Even if it's a defeated presidential candidate?

JOHN EDWARDS: I don't think it matters, unless something dramatic changes. Unless there's some dramatic change. I think the reality is, in the interim, there will be -- before we have a presidential candidate and before we reach the next presidential campaign -- there will be a number of voices in the Democratic Party. It's unlikely we're going to have one single voice. The same thing has been true of the Republicans in the past.

CHARLIE ROSE: I want you to join in on this, but should there be a debate within the Democratic Party about the future?

JOHN EDWARDS: Again...

CHARLIE ROSE: You don't want the Democratic Party to say to the nation, we have forgotten about the South. We realize that we can't win in the South, because you have got to believe you can win in the South.

JOHN EDWARDS: I know we can win in the South. I know it for very practical reasons. We have -- if you look, Elizabeth pointed this out during the campaign. If you look at the present governor or the last governor prior to this election of the Southern states, I think virtually every Southern state had a Democratic governor. So I know. I won in the South. I know we can win in the South. I was elected in 1998 to the Senate in North Carolina.

CHARLIE ROSE: Yeah, but your seat is now held by a Republican.

JOHN EDWARDS: That's correct. What I believe -- I'll go back to what I believe -- what I believe is that the people that I grew up with in that small town in rural North Carolina, I think they want leaders, they want presidential candidates for the Democratic Party who respect them, who respect the way they live, who want them to do better, and who don't look down on them. You know, I always use my father as an example, because he's I think a good example. He used to say to me, he could always tell within 30 seconds when someone was talking down to him. And he worked in a mill. He had a high school education, but he was a wonderful, salt of the earth

-- is a wonderful, salt of the earth man, like millions of people across this country. And people around America, including in the rural South, need to know that we, Democrats, and our presidential candidates respect them, respect their way of life, and we're going to fight for them in every way.

CHARLIE ROSE: OK, but that raises this question. Jump in on this. Has the Democratic Party in the past and in this most recent campaign failed to communicate that idea, that they were not talking down to them, that they understood their problems, all the things that you said during the campaign. I could read you your speeches during the campaign. I am one of you.

JOHN EDWARDS: I'll bet you could.

CHARLIE ROSE: So my point is, does there something has to happen within the Democratic Party so that it has, in a relationship to voters, the kinds of ideas you just articulated?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I don't think it's worth overreacting, frankly, to the election, for a lot of reasons. One is that we did have, you know, did lose John's seat to a Republican. But...

CHARLIE ROSE: Even his county, his home county went for George Bush.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: His home county always goes for George Bush. But we won High Point, for example, where they've lost a lot of jobs in the furniture industry. You know, but we - the Democratic Party took back the state house. We had a very, very strong win in the governor's race.

CHARLIE ROSE: So what's the difference in winning the governor's race and winning the state house and not winning presidential politics?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Well, part of it is, and Ralph Reed can describe this in some way, as you know, that makes it seem very positive. But the Republican campaign was not all just, you know, good Americans getting out and working. There was a lot of negativity. I heard Jimmy Carter talk about this, and say he would never -- they would never have spoken -- he would never have dreamed of speaking about Gerald Ford in the way that the Republican Party spoke about John Kerry. One of these men was going to be the president. You needed to talk about them in a way that recognized that they were going to hold this position, with some respect and esteem for them. That didn't happen. We saw just one bomb being thrown after another. And it was -- detracted from the real conversation that I think did happen on the state level, about the priorities that these men held, that John Kerry held, that Mike Easley holds, that Jim Black holds, the -- who is likely to be the speaker of the House in North Carolina. Their principles that they believe in are basically the same principles, but they got a chance to talk about it on the

state level. And they frankly didn't get a chance much to talk about it, because you were deflecting bombs. We'd be attacked by terrorists if John Kerry was elected. The Bible would be banned if John Kerry was elected.

CHARLIE ROSE: Tell me what you think for the Democratic Party, over the next four years, in opposition, what's the imperative?

JOHN EDWARDS: Stand up for what we believe in. Fight for the core principles we believe in. I mentioned a couple of them earlier. Work versus wealth. Doing something about people who live in poverty. We also have to -- I believe, because both of us believe, that we have young children, I want my children to be safe. And I believe it is a primary responsibility of the president of the United States to keep the American people and to keep this country safe. So these are not just -- these are not something that came out of some strategy session. I mean, these are core beliefs that I have, both of us have, and we've had our whole lives.

CHARLIE ROSE: So your primary priority is right here.

JOHN EDWARDS: Of course it is.

CHARLIE ROSE: Has always been, will always be?

JOHN EDWARDS: Yes.

CHARLIE ROSE: You will get through this thing.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I will.

CHARLIE ROSE: I know you will. Someone said about you, I read somewhere, they said, if those cancer cells knew what they were up against, they would leave immediately.

JOHN EDWARDS: A dangerous place.

CHARLIE ROSE: They would say, we can't win, we're leaving, you know. Sorry we came. We're out of here. Stop the chemotherapy. We give up.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: That would be nice.

(CROSSTALK)

JOHN EDWARDS: Don't you wish they'd do that.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Yes.

CHARLIE ROSE: But at some point you will move on and beyond this, and, you know, continue the therapy and all the things that are necessary. You're going to leave Washington.

JOHN EDWARDS: Yes. We're going to -- well, the present plan we'll be in Washington until May or June. My kids will finish school, the school year. Elizabeth will finish her treatment. Then we're going back to a farm out in rural North Carolina.

CHARLIE ROSE: Not very far from where I live, as a matter of fact.

JOHN EDWARDS: Not far.

CHARLIE ROSE: Why do that? Why not stay in Washington? Why not live here, write, sit on some boards, speak out on the issues you care about?

JOHN EDWARDS: Oh, I'll speak out. I'll fight hard on the things that I care about. And that means, I hope, working on some specific projects that can get accomplished over the next few years. Concrete things. It also means speaking, speaking here, and maybe speaking some abroad, working on some ideas and some public policy institutes. I intend to do all those things over the next several years.

And most importantly, be out there pushing the things that we care about. Some of which we've talked about today.

CHARLIE ROSE: But you go back to North Carolina, because that's home.

JOHN EDWARDS: Yeah. We're not...

CHARLIE ROSE: You want to live there.

JOHN EDWARDS: We're not of Washington. We are -- my blood pressure goes down when I cross the North Carolina state line. I'll bet yours does too. And...

CHARLIE ROSE: The first town you get to when you cross the North Carolina state line is my hometown.

JOHN EDWARDS: That's exactly right. That's absolutely right. So we want to live in rural North Carolina. It's who I am. It's who we are. And it's where we're happiest.

CHARLIE ROSE: Do you want him to run for president in 2008?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I want him to do whatever makes him happy.

CHARLIE ROSE: What will make him happy?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I don't know that. You know.

CHARLIE ROSE: You don't know?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: No, I mean, I think that, you know, we have -- now I'd like to see us work in the 2006 elections, both of us, to work to speak out on behalf of candidates who can be running for the -- for congressional seats, who can be running in state house races, so that we can make certain that the things that we care about are represented in the political spectrum by people who are voting, not just people who are speaking out. And you see what the landscape is.

CHARLIE ROSE: Let me ask this of both of you...

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Sure.

CHARLIE ROSE: ... because you've had a remarkable political rise. Who -- I mean, if you never have anything to do with politics, this has been a great journey for you.

JOHN EDWARDS: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

CHARLIE ROSE: I mean, no one ever could have imagined that a trial lawyer who feels the urge to run, having gone through tragedy personally, is elected to the Senate, almost is selected to be vice president in the 2000 race and then is selected in 2004. I mean, this is a remarkable thing.

JOHN EDWARDS: It is.

CHARLIE ROSE: I can't believe and no one else can believe that with that kind of experience you've had, you don't want to be president. You've got to believe in yourself and your connection with people. You must have felt that. And why not say, I do want to be president? Whether it's 2008 is another question. But you can't do what I've done, felt what I've had, experienced what I have, without wanting to be there.

JOHN EDWARDS: Well, you know, one of the great lessons from -- it's a perfectly fair question, first of all. One of the great lessons of this last campaign, particularly the primary campaign, was I came to the realization -- and I was very glad to come to it -- that these causes

that I talked about, you know, whether it's two Americas and poverty, civil rights, all the things, keeping the country safe, all the things that I care about, that that's what this was about for me. And it was the right reason for me to have run for president. It wasn't about me. It was about what I wanted to do for the country. And I still want to see those things done for this country that I love so much. The question is, what's the best way to do it?

CHARLIE ROSE: The best way to do it is to get elected president.

JOHN EDWARDS: Yes.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: So simple.

(CROSSTALK)

JOHN EDWARDS: That's exactly right. Do you have the power to put me there?

(CROSSTALK)

CHARLIE ROSE: No.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: But what he's saying is really true. I mean, you can't do this day after day after day if you think that it is about you. It has to be...

JOHN EDWARDS: Doesn't work.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: It has to be about the...

JOHN EDWARDS: Doesn't work.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: You can't. It's just -- nobody has -- no one has an ego that great. But you have to be motivated by the people that you're touching and what you're seeing every day.

JOHN EDWARDS: And people feel -- voters, regular folks, they feel in here why you're doing it. They know it. I mean, they know it intuitively. It's just the way you talk about it, how you talk about it. They know whether it's about you, or whether it's about what you want to do for them, for the country.

CHARLIE ROSE: Some say he couldn't have been reelected in North Carolina. Some say he's too liberal to be a kind of new centrist Democrat that can win the presidency. You say?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I say that he has a really authentic voice that comes not from something he read in a book, but from the way he lived his life. And there is no better voice, I don't think, for the country, but I also think for the party than someone who speaks that way. He...

CHARLIE ROSE: And so labels don't matter to you. And you don't believe in them. And you don't believe that John Edwards can't communicate...

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I mean, labels have always misinformed us. And you know, and I think that's true regardless of what you're talking about.

John, for example, supported having a board that would oversee any infringement of our civil liberties by the needs to protect ourselves, to have a civil liberties protection board, just someone to make certain that we were doing the things we needed to do, both to keep ourselves safe and to protect the things that we were supposed to be protecting, including our civil liberties. He supported that. So did Orrin Hatch.

Is that a liberal idea or a conservative idea? You know, I don't think you can put things in pigeon holes that way. People -- and I don't think that's the way people think about candidates. I think they say, does this person get my life? Do they care...

JOHN EDWARDS: I know it's not the way they think about candidates.

CHARLIE ROSE: And they think about whether it's an authentic voice, is it someone that understands me...

JOHN EDWARDS: Are you real? Do you respect them? Do you believe in the basic values that they believe in? Do you care about making their lives better? I mean, I think that's what most people are looking for, and they're looking for personal characteristics. Integrity matters. Character matters. It's why, you know, people always talk about, you know, you want your leaders to be good people. Of course you do. What's wrong with that? I want my leaders to be good people. If you're a husband and you're a good husband, if you're a father, do you love your kids, I mean, there's nothing wrong with that.

CHARLIE ROSE: You think the country is on the wrong track?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I think in some ways, we are on the wrong track. Some very important ways we're on the wrong track. We are not -- we are turning a blind eye to too many problems, thinking somehow they're going to magically evaporate. And we're loading our children up, my children, with enormous debt, and how in the world are they ever going to get out from under it? How are we going to solve Social Security and deal with poverty and make certain that people have the health care that I have and that we deserve? How are we going to

make certain we have jobs in this country? If we're doing all the things that put us in the wrong category, where the debt bothers me a lot. We don't believe in debt in our own family. You know, John didn't used to let us buy a sweater if it meant we had less money in the bank because we wanted to have -- but Americans have less and less financial security.

The president talks about buying houses. But people's debt, you know, the amount of debt they're carrying is so high that it's just not reasonable to have those dreams for people. We need to change the way we're doing so many things, so that people have opportunity. It's not so that we have an opportunity to give handouts. I think we pretty much decided as a country that's not the way to do it.

But so that people have opportunities. And it's just the case now that too many people don't. And so...

JOHN EDWARDS: And also, it's a combination of -- Elizabeth is talking about practicalities. And practicalities matter. I mean, for example, we're trying to keep the American people safe. I mean, I would ask such simple questions like, our children who are in school tomorrow, are they safe? Do we know that their school is safe? Do we know that when we send our kids out on the bus or we drop them off at the school that they're safe, that they're going to be safe? Have we done everything we can to keep our kids safe?

I mean, those are the kinds of practical questions we as a nation should be asking. But then there are bigger questions. How does America compete over the next 30 to 40 years with China and India? China is graduating 10 times the number of engineers and people in the science community that we're graduating. The only thing that has made America competitive over the last 20, 25 years is the productivity of the American worker. And we have begun to lose that edge.

On another front, we are seeing a new generation of potential terrorists born around the world. And what are we doing as a nation to reach out to that generation, to make it clear that the ideals that America believes in are not -- are not antagonistic to them? That in fact, we share many of the same values, many of the same beliefs. And we want them to be able to live their lives in peace and prosperity. What are we doing to communicate that to them? I mean, leaders in this country...

CHARLIE ROSE: What do you think we're doing?

JOHN EDWARDS: I think we're not doing nearly enough. I think we're not doing nearly enough, whether it's public diplomacy, whatever we need to do to communicate directly to those people, we're not doing enough.

CHARLIE ROSE: So you'd like to see the president immediately begin to reach out in terms of those people, who, because of the war or because of what other issue they have about this country...

JOHN EDWARDS: What I'd like to see, Charlie, is I'd like to see the president of the United States recognize not only the day-to-day practical problems that most Americans face -- whether it's their having to pay -- trouble paying their bills and the income squeeze, the health care problems, keeping kids safe in their schools. I'd also like for our president to have the vision to see the problems that are coming down the road, 10, 15, 25 years from now.

CHARLIE ROSE: One is the challenge from China.

JOHN EDWARDS: The challenge from China. Another is the challenge of a new generation of potential terrorists who are growing up around the world. We have, here at home, you know, we have problems with the potential for Social Security going broke over the next 50 to 75 years. We have families -- we have the income gap in America between the wealthiest Americans and most Americans. It's getting bigger and bigger. Is that what we really believe?

You spoke earlier about faith and our faith belief. You know, I grew up in the Southern Baptist Church.

We believe in taking care of the least of those around us and those who are struggling the most. We have the number of people falling into poverty is going up. It's not going down.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: One of the things, sometimes when you say we need to reach out to the Arab street, so that they -- but it's not appeasement. I think sometimes that gets described by people in the administration as, oh, they're just for some sort of appeasement. We want them to understand who we are. I don't think that -- I don't think that people on the Arab street understand that we are a generous, kind, compassionate people. I think they think -- they have a very different view of us. What we want them to do is have an accurate view of us.

CHARLIE ROSE: Part of that is not our problem. Part of that is because of what they're taught and...

(CROSSTALK)

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Al Jazeera is showing one picture. Are we showing another? You know, don't we need to be? You know, we've used Voice of America so effectively in the past. Don't we need to be more aggressive in terms of reaching out and making certain they know who we are? Supporting programs...

JOHN EDWARDS: Yes, but, of course. I mean, we have to aggressively crush those who are part of the terrorist movement today. But what I'm talking about in vision is recognizing that it could get bigger. It could get stronger over this -- with this new generation, unless we act in a proactive way to do something about it.

CHARLIE ROSE: American public seem to have said in this election we feel safer with George Bush.

JOHN EDWARDS: Yes. Well, I think, first of all, I said it earlier, for my family's sake, for the country that I love so much, we have to take every step we can take, reasonably take, to keep this country safe. And we need to be out there talking about it. There are lots of things -- I asked a practical question just a few minutes ago. You know, are kids safe in their schools? Have we done everything here at home to keep the country safe, in our ports, on our borders? The things that need to be done? You know, in my judgment we haven't. There's a lot of work to be done.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I do, in fact, blame the media for one thing. And that is, you constantly hear the media saying, well, national security, that's George Bush's strong point. I bet nearly every anchor of or any of those can recall having said those words at least once and probably lots of times. But if you really examined whether or not we were taking every step we needed to take to keep ourselves safe in this country, you'd find that we hadn't taken so many of the steps.

CHARLIE ROSE: In terms of our ports and everything else.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: And some of them wouldn't even cost any money, but the president had given in, for example, to chemical industries. But because the neutral, the neutral speaker, the commentator on television, the host on a news show, said, well, that's the president strong suit, people made the assumption that it must be so, and that we were just spitting in the wind.

CHARLIE ROSE: All right, let me ask you this. The two of you have gotten terrific media. I've never read a bad word about you.

Here is the question. The second question is, why don't you run for something? But let me stay with the first question. Which is, I mean, do you think that the media is what? Is not doing its job in American politics, that the media is falling down? Not anybody in particular, but in terms of reflecting the reality of the American experience?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I think that, well, I think that the 24-hour news cycle -- there are a lot of things I think that have distorted politics recently. The 24-hour news cycle, where whatever the hot thing is, I think that, you know, when somebody said something inflammatory, that became the topic of conversation, whether or not it was really meaningful in the political discussion. Was -- became -- what happened. That was all there was, 24 hours a day, that's all you heard.

What used to happen a century ago is that a topic would come out. There would be a pamphlet. People would read long, long discussions of the issue and make a decision.

Now too often with the hurried life, people turn just to those few words someone says on

television. It puts so much more responsibility in the hands of journalists to make certain that what they're saying is both meaningful -- is both meaningful in terms of moving us forward in the discussion, and -- but it also means that a slight deviation, like saying something like the president, you know, his strong suit is national security, has greater implications, because that may be the only thing somebody hears about.

CHARLIE ROSE: OK, but that's a chicken-and-egg thing, in fact. In a sense, it is the following: People -- reporters might say that because they look at polls and they say to Americans, why do you -- you know, what do you evaluate most favorably the president on? And they'll say national security. So then they talk about it that way. I mean, it's a chicken- and-egg, because reporters are not saying why you shouldn't feel that way.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Right. Well, I mean, except that...

CHARLIE ROSE: You see what I mean? Reporters are reporting the fact that they read in polls and everywhere else.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I mean, but you're right. It's chicken-and-egg. We don't know which happened first. I have of course my opinion on which happened first.

And then other things happened in politics. And that is with the gerrymandering of districts so often, we have now more highly Republican districts, more highly Democratic districts. And so people aren't trying to -- candidates aren't trying to speak the way national candidates do, the way statewide candidates do to the wide swath. Often they're speaking to these narrow -- to a highly Republican electorate, or a highly Democratic electorate. The fights for the primaries end up being a swing to the right or a swing to the left, instead of the way it used to be, where people had to say to people of all stripes why it was their ideas were the best. And I think that has perverted the process too. It's put people at extremes of language, instead of talking about the way their ideas really impact on people's lives.

CHARLIE ROSE: Having said that, on a personal level, as a candidate, what was the most instructive thing that happened to you in the primary and general election campaign? Informing, instructive, you know.

JOHN EDWARDS: It wasn't a single thing.

CHARLIE ROSE: OK.

JOHN EDWARDS: It was about a year that I spent in Iowa, in New Hampshire and to a lesser extent in South Carolina, with, as Elizabeth described it earlier, in town hall meetings, listening, not talking but listening to what people were saying. That's where the two Americas and the need to build one America came from. It didn't come from me.

CHARLIE ROSE: So you listened and you figured out.

JOHN EDWARDS: I heard it. And I realized it was completely consistent with my own life experience.

CHARLIE ROSE: Did somebody say there are two Americas out there, Senator?

JOHN EDWARDS: No.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: No.

CHARLIE ROSE: They just said...

JOHN EDWARDS: No, I listened to them and I heard them talk about their fears, and they fell in different categories. Sometimes they were health care, sometimes they were sending their kids to college. It was the jobs, worried about their jobs leaving. It was a whole variety of things. But I realized that was exactly what I had seen my whole life, basically, growing up. And they saw things the same way I saw them.

CHARLIE ROSE: Is anything in you that wishes that I, Elizabeth Edwards, was a candidate?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Not...

CHARLIE ROSE: A candidate for public office.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Not a single bone.

CHARLIE ROSE: Nothing?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Nothing. I mean, to say the opportunity to campaign, to talk about the issues with people, to talk about people that I believed in deeply, was enormously gratifying. I was junior class president when I was 16 years old, and I got it out of my system.

CHARLIE ROSE: That did it for you.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: That's right. You know, having to run the prom...

CHARLIE ROSE: But why is it...

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: ... that was enough to -- enough to quiet it.

CHARLIE ROSE: Why is it you don't feel that? I mean, is it just that we're all by temperament want to do one thing or the other? You wouldn't want to be in front of the camera or behind the camera. You want to be a candidate or you want to be a king maker. Or you want to be a...

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: No, I mean, I think that being a candidate is not just the ability to articulate what you think is important and where you think the country ought to go. There's a lot of other pieces to it. I wish we could fix some of those. There's campaign finance, you know, there's the fact that he had to spend, John Kerry had to spend, I think, you know, all candidates had to spend time on the phone, calling people up, asking them to support -- to support them. That's really hard work. I don't know envy anybody doing that.

CHARLIE ROSE: You want him to do what he wants to do.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I do.

CHARLIE ROSE: And what do you want him to do?

JOHN EDWARDS: He's good, man.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: What we...

CHARLIE ROSE: Don't you want him to run for president? Come on.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I want him -- I want him to be a voice in this process. I wanted him to be president. That's why I worked so hard in the primaries. And if I still feel the same way in 2007, I'll probably want him to be president then. But it's not 2007. And I have...

CHARLIE ROSE: If you don't decide until 2007, it's not going to happen. I can tell you that. You know that.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: But he'll be -- he's going to be a part of this, a part of the...

CHARLIE ROSE: Process.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: A part of the process.

CHARLIE ROSE: In other words, if there's...

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: No doubt about it.

CHARLIE ROSE: ... (UNINTELLIGIBLE) conversation within America and within the Democratic Party about whether this country is going, he has...

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: He ought to be...

CHARLIE ROSE: ... earned the right to be a voice in that conversation.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: It's important that he is a voice, because he is -- I mean, because he -- the things that he cares about, he cares about from his perspective, it's part of the going back to North Carolina, not because he learned them in a book, but because he lived them. So his ability to express them and to express them passionately is almost I think, you know, almost unparalleled.

JOHN EDWARDS: You see why I married her?

CHARLIE ROSE: You see why I wanted to do this together and I kept insisting she be here. So what? I mean, so what is it -- unparalleled? What is unparalleled?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: His ability to express the things that he cares about. When he talks about two Americas, it's because he lived that life. When he talks about the fact that the party has to speak with respect and treat the people that we want to make certain have opportunities in the country...

CHARLIE ROSE: Doesn't Barack Obama say that? Or doesn't -- you're just saying that in your experience...

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I think he has a unique -- a unique ability to do that. I think there are other people who do it, but his experience having done it in one of the toughest areas in the country to do it, in terms of being able to articulate on a national stage...

CHARLIE ROSE: I think you have said this, but I want to make sure I understand it. You don't have to reposition yourself, in your judgment, in any significant way if you decide that you want to be the Democratic nominee in 2008.

JOHN EDWARDS: I will not do it. Period.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: He would be useless if he repositioned himself.

JOHN EDWARDS: I'm going to be who I am.

CHARLIE ROSE: And who you are on the issues and what you have run on in the past...

JOHN EDWARDS: Of course. Of course.

CHARLIE ROSE: ... and building on that in terms of new ideas and new information.

JOHN EDWARDS: And fighting for what I believe in. It doesn't come from someplace else. It comes from right here.

CHARLIE ROSE: When are you going to decide this?

JOHN EDWARDS: Oh, we've got at least couple of years to think about this. We have got to get Elizabeth well.

CHARLIE ROSE: Well, she's going to be all right.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I'm getting my diagnosis from Charlie.

(CROSSTALK)

CHARLIE ROSE: You what?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: I'm getting my diagnosis from you.

CHARLIE ROSE: Yes, but you also are the best person -- I'll come back to cancer as we end this -- notion -- I mean, you are there looking at all the possibilities that medical science had for us. I mean, you, Elizabeth Edwards, are going to get a chance to look at where the hope is.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Right.

CHARLIE ROSE: Tell me just a little bit about that before we leave here. As someone who has the kind of cancer you do.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: You know, for me, it's -- we have -- there's medicine and the great people who are working to make these advances, not just in this country, across the world. And I want to make certain that we are examining those, that we are opening every door. It's why.

CHARLIE ROSE: Whatever it is. Stem cell may not apply to cancer. You want to make sure that stem cell has a chance to be everything it can be.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Everything it can be, particularly since I think that it's gotten so misdescribed. But in any respect that we're supporting these things, that we're not nickel-and-diming medical research, that we're not -- that we are making certain that we do everything that's humanly possible.

CHARLIE ROSE: Funding for NIH and all that.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Right. And we've seen some increases but not, you know, not the level that we need to really do the research that needs to be done on a national level, that's ready to be done if we just sort of pull the string and let it happen. Because it has such a great effect on people's lives.

And then we need to make certain that that health care is available to people. The people I spoke to who don't have -- didn't have health care on this, it doesn't do any good for it, it makes no difference to them whether this progress is made if it's not available to them individually. So for me it's a two-pronged fight. Making certain that we're making the advances, and then doing something about the fact that the best health care in the world available right here is not available to so many Americans.

CHARLIE ROSE: Can you afford to think about the fact that you might not win this?

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: No. You never can. I don't think -- we really are optimists. You have to believe that you're going to win the fight -- the fight that you fight. And that's what allows you to put everything into it, is that you are going to win it. But I think that the truth of the matter is, that there are people who believe that as strongly as I believe it, who didn't make it. But everything that I know about what -- about my condition suggests to me that I'm going to make it.

CHARLIE ROSE: You've got your will, you've got his love and you've got medical science and faith.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: That's right.

JOHN EDWARDS: She has to make it for all of us. For all of us.

CHARLIE ROSE: Thank you, Senator.

JOHN EDWARDS: Thank you, Charlie.

CHARLIE ROSE: A pleasure to have you on this program.

JOHN EDWARDS: Glad to be with you.

CHARLIE ROSE: Thank you.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: Thank you, Charlie.

CHARLIE ROSE: Great to have you.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS: It's always great to be with you.

CHARLIE ROSE: Thank you.

John Edwards, Elizabeth Edwards, from their home in Washington D.C.

Thank you for joining us. See you next time.